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CORRESPONDENCE

IN REGARD TO

THE BATTLE OF CORINTH, MISS.

October 3d and 4th, 1862.

MAJOR GENERAL C. S. HAMILTON,

Late United States Army,

—AND—

ARTHUR C. DUCAT.

[From Chicago Tribune, Oct. 18th, 1882.]

At the anniversary of the Battle of Corinth, which was appropriately celebrated by the old soldiers of this city and vicinity on the evening of the 4th inst., Gen. C. S. Hamilton, of Milwaukee, gave a very vivid account of the engagement, which resulted in a victory for the Union cause. Mr. Hamilton was a participant in the fight, and his position was such as to give him every facility for seeing all of the engagement and thoroughly understanding the events that resulted in the battle. Owing to the crowded columns of *The Tribune* the following day, there appeared only a brief summary of Mr. Hamilton's paper. It is now given in full, as it is of historic value.

COMRADES: You will allow me to premise that in what I am about to say of the battle of Corinth, if there is more or less that is personal to myself, it is not because of any personal vanity, but because I cannot state the facts that should be known without some personal reference. I should be reluctant to say anything that might be construed as claiming for myself what might be accorded to others—but what is desired is to get at the actual facts. I may further say that the chief reason other than the one given is that I have again and again been besought to make public the truths that I am about to relate, while there are those living who can corroborate them, and that the true history of one of the most important battles of the great Rebellion may be understood. Most of the officers who took part in that War are beyond middle-age; indeed, the greater part are fast reaching the period of aged manhood. Every year greatly decreases the number of those who were active in the War, and but few years comparatively remain to gather facts from the living actors.

In order to understand the importance of the victory of Corinth, and its bearing on the fortunes of the War, we must look carefully over the whole theatre of the war at that time. It is not sufficient that we take into consideration the situation in the Valley of the Mississippi; we must go further and examine the status of the contending armies stretching through the border States from the Mississippi to the Atlantic, and see what had been gained or lost in nearly two years of war, by the armies of the North. It was the last important battle of 1862 and virtually closed the campaigns of both Union and Rebel armies for that year. These campaigns opened with the brilliant victories of Forts Henry and Donelson; followed by the capture of Island Number Ten, and by the great battle of Shiloh and the occupation of Corinth and Memphis. These operations in the West may be summed up as follows: The Confederate armies had been driven from the Ohio River, almost out of the

States of Tennessee and Kentucky, a steady ing back for a distance of 200 miles, the Federal occupation reaching the Gulf States, where chivalrous foes had been sure a Yankee would never set foot. Our lines stretched Memphis through Corinth and Nashville to Knoxville, East Tenn. In the East the campaign had opened by the advance of the Army of the Potomac to the Peninsula and toward Rich-

mond. Right here let me say that if the Army of the Potomac had been pushed from the time it stopped before Yorktown, with a tithe of the energy and courage shown by Gen. Grant from the moment his forces presented themselves in front of Fort Henry, the Rebel Capital of Richmond would have fallen into our hands, as would have the State of Virginia; and the theatre of war would have been removed to the Cotton States, where it belonged.

BUT THE CHILDISH DELAY

before the insignificant works of Yorktown gave ample time for the Confederates to concentrate their strength, and win back by hard blows what they had held so long with wooden guns in front of Washington, but which they had been forced to yield by the flank movement to the Peninsula. A week of energy from the day the army came in sight of Yorktown, instead of a month of useless delay, and Richmond would have fallen like a ripe pear.

The country had been full of hope—a hope changed almost to despair through incompetent generalship. McClellan and his army were driven from the Peninsula, and Pope, in the gallant but vain endeavor to stem the tide of Confederate victories, had been overcome in the Wilderness. Buell had been forced back from Middle Tennessee to Louisville, so that on the day of the battle whose anniversary we celebrate the Confederate armies occupied the line of the Potomac, as they did the day after the great battle of Bull Run, and of all the territory gained by the operations of our great armies there remained to us from the Atlantic to the plains only that contiguous to the banks of the Mississippi from Cairo to Memphis. Those were glorious victories for the Confederate arms, and filled the Southern heart with swelling pride and the full confidence of ultimate success. These achievements in the East were but the heralds of what was confidently expected in the West. The Union armies must be driven back to their own soil, and a mighty effort was made to concentrate an overwhelming force of Confederates which should thrust the invaders back to the banks of the Ohio.

Alone of all the territory gained at so much cost there remained to us only that of Western Tennessee and Kentucky; and right here I think I hazard nothing in saying that a defeat at Corinth twenty years ago to-day would have left no considerable obstacle in the way for the Rebel

to occupy again the line of the Ohio, and, being done, all the blood and treasure in nearly two years of war would have been wasted, and the contending armies would have stood on almost the identical footing they occupied a year and a half before. The hopes of the North had been blasted by the failures in the East; the land was filled with mourning, and the darkness of defeat and disappointment hung like a pall over the free States.

It was amid this gloom that the battle of Corbush was fought against much greater forces, and yet the Union was victorious. It was a single star gleaming through the darkness, but lighting up the hearts of a Nation with hope and gladness. In the tactical strength of the forces engaged it did not stand with the battles of the Peninsula, but the importance of its results and the magnitude of its consequences it loses nothing when placed side by side with any of the great battles of the War, excepting alone that continuous battle which forced Lee to the surrender of his brave army at Appomattox. The bravery with which it was fought I do not believe has been surpassed, and the preponderance of the Rebel forces, nearly two to one, rarely happened during the War. You are proud to have been of that band; I am proud to have borne a part, and yours and my children for generations to come will be proud of the part each of us shared in that memorable fight. I have little to say of the details of the engagement. You are all familiar with its main features, and more familiar with your own immediate surroundings.

THERE IS, HOWEVER, ONE IMPORTANT FACT not generally known, but with those who do know it personally there can be but one opinion as to its bearing on the results of the battle. The plan of the battle as fixed by Gen. Rosecrans on the morning of Oct. 3, and as detailed in his official report, was for Davies' division to take the centre in front of Corinth; with McKean's division on his left, while Hamilton's division was thrown out on the Purdy road on the extreme right, as far as the outer Rebel intrenchments, and nearly three miles from the town. Stanley's division was to the left and rear, and about as far from the town as Hamilton's, and held in reserve. Hamilton was to connect the left of his division with Davies' right, and thus await the attack. Then when Davies' division was attacked, it was gradually to retire, and Hamilton and McKean were to fall on the Confederate flanks. In other words, the real battle was to be fought within a box, the front of which was open, and the enemy was to be drawn in and crushed by the two sides. Now, there is no one so great a novice in war but will wonder at a plan of battle which, while it placed but a single division in the front of the enemy, with orders to retire when attacked, and thus allow an overwhelming force of the enemy to separate the other divisions, cutting the Federal army in two parts. But such was the plan for the 3d of October and such was the plan for the 4th, but which was frustrated by the following incident: You all remember the change that was made in the positions of our troops during the night of the 3d; how Stanley's division was called in and occupied the earthworks; how Davies' division was thrown back to and within the

edge of the town; and that Hamilton's division was called in and occupied the rising ground on the north and northeast of the town, while McKean's troops were held partly as a reserve. And here is the way it happened. An attempt was made late in the afternoon of the 3d by Hamilton's division to attack the enemy's left flank, but which was thwarted by one brigade becoming separated from the other and becoming engaged with a watching party on the enemy's extreme left. The attack could not safely be made but by the whole division, and before the brigade could be withdrawn and got into supporting position night had come and the flank attack was frustrated. The threatened movement of the division had attracted the enemy's attention, and effectually checked the forward movement of the Rebel army on Davies. The day closed then with Hamilton holding a position between the Purdy road and the outermost Rebel intrenchments, facing the enemy, but with a dense forest thick with undergrowth, between. Davies' division had fallen well back toward the town, and though fighting bravely, were forced back by many times their number. McKean's division occupied a similar position on the extreme left, while between these two divisions of Hamilton and McKean lay the whole Rebel army, ready to spring upon the town in the morning. No orders had been received by me from the General commanding for several hours.

About 9 p. m. his Chief of Staff brought me this order—to wit: "Place your batteries on the Purdy road at 10 p. m. and play them two hours in a northwest direction with shot and shell, where the enemy is massed, and at midnight attack them with your whole division with the bayonet." The officer who brought that order and who took back my reply is Gen. A. C. Ducat. I said, "Tell Gen. Rosecrans I cannot execute that order until I see him personally, and explain to him the difficulties in the way, and how it must result if carried out." An hour passed, and the officer who brought the order returned, bringing the commanding General. An officer of high rank (Gen. John B. Sanborn, of Minnesota), here to-night, and many others heard the following conversation:

"Gen. Hamilton, what do you mean by disobeying my order to attack the enemy?"

I replied: "Gen. Rosecrans, I am ready to execute your order; but there is too much at stake here to risk it by what must prove a futile attack, owing to the darkness and the dense forest, and it seemed a plain duty to explain to you the position, and the result if your order is executed. The forest and undergrowth are so dense that my troops

CANNOT RETAIN THEIR FORMATION

for five minutes after they move. It is too dark to distinguish friend from foe, and my division once disorganized in the forest cannot be reformed for battle until morning. My troops are not in supporting distance of any others, and when the assault is made on the town your army will be cut in two as it is now, and will be destroyed. The troops should be drawn in and the divisions placed in front of the town within the earthworks, and in immediate support of each other. The position is a strong one, and if occupied we

shall win a victory; if left as they are now there is nothing before you but a terrible defeat."

A moment of reflection, and then came the answer: "Hamilton, you are right. Put your division as you suggest; the others shall be placed accordingly."

It was thus that the troops came to occupy the positions they did on the morning of this day twenty years ago; thus that victory came where defeat was inevitable; thus that the territory to the banks of the Ohio was preserved to us, and the silver lining to the cloud showed itself to the whole people. It was but an incident, but big with fate, and as such we must look back upon it with infinite satisfaction.

And now before I close I must touch upon one other matter—a matter of justice to those officers and men who took part in the battle of Iuka. All who fought at Iuka and lived were present at Corinth, and so intimately were those battles connected that I am not out of place in alluding to the former in what I now have to say. The battle of Iuka was fought on the 19th of September, just two weeks preceding that of Corinth. It was a fierce contest—none more so. The long list of dead and wounded, compared with the number engaged, shows that for an action of two hours in length it was hotly contested. The still longer list of the dead and wounded of the enemy, with the number of prisoners taken, speaks louder than words of the bravery of our men. If men do well in the heat of battle and other men speak of them, just words should be spoken; sneers are unjust and out of place.

In the first volume of Gen. Sherman's Memoirs, page 261 (writing of the battle of Iuka, the following passage occurs: "Price perceived his advantage and attacked with vehemence the head of Rosecrans' column, Hamilton's division, beating it back, capturing a battery, and disabling 736 men." And a little further on he says: "In my experience these concerted movements generally fail unless with the very best kind of troops," etc. Well, now, I believe Gen. Sherman is about the last man to do intentional injustice to any

one, much less a soldier of the War of the Rebellion; but look at it, turn it over, read it backwards, any way, every way, and what does sound like, or look like, but a sneer. It is true this battle was not fought by him or his troops. He was a hundred miles away; but if he fought it, or the men under his command fought it, there would have been at least a

COMMENDATION OF THE BRAVERY SHOWN there would have been a memorandum, at least to the effect that if a battery was lost, it was captured, and was not lost. And further, that the troops were beaten back, they did not retreat; them, or at any time, retire a half musket from where the line was formed and the fight. And as to the battery and the men who worked it, he would at least have the story that every officer and nearly every man and horse was killed or wounded before they fired the last shot, and fell into the enemy's hands. And he would have further stated that, if he had 736 men disabled, the enemy lost 1,438 men, and that on the whole it was a gallant fight, and that our men slept on the field and the enemy didn't, and finally would have indeed been angry if anybody else had sneered at it if it had been fought by his men.

What would Gen. Sherman think and how would he feel if his "march through Georgia," his capture of Atlanta, Savannah, Charleston, Columbia, and the great "concerted movement" of his chief, Grant, and himself, which cornered the armies of the Confederacy in North Carolina and Virginia, without hope of escape—if history should allude to it only by his having so many thousand men disabled? But then Gen. Sherman had really "the very best kind of troops."

Now let me say that Gen. Sherman had no intention to be unjust, though he was unjust. No General is more willing to accord everything that rightly belongs, none less envious of his brother Generals, none from whom justice springs more spontaneously than he.

LETTER FROM ARTHUR C. DUCAT.

[From Chicago Tribune, Oct. 25th, 1882.]

DOWNER'S GROVE, Ill., Oct. 18.—In your issue of to-day under the above heading you published a paper read by Maj.-Gen. C. S. Hamilton, late U. S. A., at the anniversary dinner of the surviving officers of the battle of Corinth. Gen. Hamilton is represented as having read as follows:

[The extract is to long to publish entire. It is the statement made by the essayist that the plan of the battle embraced the retirement of Davies' division, when attacked, when Hamilton and McKean were to fall on both flanks of the enemy. This would have cut the Federal forces into three separated commands. Gen. Hamilton goes on to say that this plan was frustrated, and that he refused to obey the order of Rosecrans "brought by Gen. A. C. Ducat" to charge the enemy at

night until the commanding officer could look over the ground. Gen. Rosecrans, he says, came to his headquarters, looked at the situation, and placed the troops as Hamilton had suggested.]

The "one important fact" stated by Gen. Hamilton has not been "generally known" and in that he is very right. From none of the 17,000 men of our army at Corinth is there, to the knowledge of the writer, any word of record even suggesting that there was any such plan of the battle of Corinth as described by Gen. Hamilton, and it will be a great surprise to the officers, who, it is supposed, should have a pretty intimate knowledge of the plans of the general commanding.

Gen. Hamilton had the right of the line of battle on the morning of the third. That line

n. Rosecrans in his report clearly gives his reasons for. He did not know just where the enemy would strike him, and his small force of cavalry was fully engaged as stated by him. His plan was therefore made to first check an advance on any of the roads leading to his position and to the enemy, from the west, north, and east, until the point of real attack could be determined. All troops within supporting distance. As before stated, Gen. Hamilton was in the right, and it would be his duty to feel our way in battle on his left and not lose it, and to use the discretion of a Major-General commanding a large and fine division of a small army not in violation of orders. The position of Gen. Hamilton's command at the early stage of the battle was an important one. It guarded the right flank on a point where one might well be anticipated, with no cavalry of our own on this front. No attack having been made in that direction, there was still plenty of work for Gen. Hamilton, with his fine and brave division, even without orders, as the main body of the enemy had been hurled upon our center, held by the gallant division of Gen. Davies on the left of Gen. Hamilton, which he was supposed to have touched. The sight and noise of battle is always a pretty true guide to a soldier as to where he should go and where he belongs. Gen. Hamilton must not fall into the error that because Davies' division, after a most obstinate and gallant resistance, was obliged to fall back for awhile, that this was part of the "box" he describes, and a part of the plan he suggests as that of Gen. Rosecrans. If the foresight of the General commanding had been as good as Gen. Hamilton's hindsight is now, and the enemy had been kind enough to inform him (Rosecrans) just what he was going to do, he might have made another order of battle, and it is possible, though not probable, that the enemy would have been repulsed on his first attacks, although he had the great advantage of being the attacking party, and an army of more than twice the number of men of ours.

The fact that the centre and left were being driven a little under vastly superior force, and the fact that Gen. Hamilton's division had not been and was not then engaged, was made known to the General commanding, and Gen. Hamilton was ordered to attack the enemy, the order reaching him in the afternoon. The attack was made with one brigade—Gen. Sullivan's—and did relieve the pressure on the left and centre, which were desperately fought and held by McArthur, Hackleman, Davies, Oglesby, McKean, Stanley, Crocker, Mower, Smith, Fuller and others—fighting as they were with superior numbers—from early in the morning until late in the afternoon. The enemy made a partial change of front to resist Hamilton.

As to the night attack mentioned by Gen. Hamilton as having been ordered by Gen. Rosecrans, the writer has no recollection of any such order or any such suggestion by the General commanding. The only night attack he remembers being talked of was the second night of the pursuit of the enemy, after the battle, when an attempt to overtake the enemy and attack him was talked of, but abandoned and not ordered,

from the condition of the stock. Can Gen. Hamilton confound this with an order he supposed he received? If Gen. Rosecrans ever contemplated a night attack on the night of the 3d surely his other Generals and commanding officers other than Gen. Hamilton, and some members of his staff, would be made acquainted with it. It is hardly probable that Gen. Hamilton's division, alone and unsupported would be ordered to make such an attack. Night attacks are not, under certain circumstances, when well arranged and carried out, always such absurd things as Gen. Hamilton would lead his hearers and his readers to suppose. There were many times during our war when night attacks would have brought about good results.

The proposed disposition of troops and plans of battle for the 4th were made known to the writer and other members of the staff early in the evening of the 3d, and instructions were given to assist personally in the dispositions and formations. I am not aware of any change in the plans of the General commanding later in the night.

The truth of history will never be arrived at from the sayings and writings of special and interested eulogists, nor by the sounding of their own praises, and deeds by those who cannot find, even in these days, a special eulogist for them. It is small glory that can be gained by attacking the dead whose voices are silent forever, or those who by misfortune, or the chapter of circumstance, or the falling off of butterfly friends, or the stabs of false and ungrateful ones, are not in a position to defend themselves, and who have not the popular ear.

Gen. Rosecrans is a great and successful soldier and a generous friend. Rich Mountain, Carnifax Ferry, Iuka, Corinth, Stone River, Tullahoma, Chattanooga, and Chicamauga would be glory enough for one man, and would entitle him to the respect and gratitude of a people for what he has done in almost any other country or any other time, and it is not his fault that devotion to his family, sore affliction, and the necessity of earning a support, together with the sensitive nature that is to be found in men of his bravery and genius, have prevented him from being in the field to resist the attacks of calumniators whose chief object seems to have been to filch his glory and build up their reputations on his deeds—and it ill becomes any man now, after twenty-two years, at a convivial meeting of his comrades on the anniversary of one of his great victories, to turn the occasion into one of attack upon his reason and his fame. To none was Gen. Rosecrans more generous in his words of praise than to Gen. Hamilton, and no man was more anxious to gain his good opinion than was the man who attacked him under such unwarrantable circumstances and at such an ill-chosen time and place. Gen. Rosecrans is not quite a dead lion, though he has been kicked at with the characteristic meanness of those who only spurn when they fear no danger. I regret the occasion that impels me to impose upon you this letter. To use a vulgarism it is "written from the shoulder," and I trust my friends will so consider it.

ARTHUR C. DUCAT.

[From Milwaukee Sunday Telegraph, Nov. 12th, 1882.]

Upon reading General Ducat's letter, General Hamilton made the following reply. Both letters will be read with deep interest by all who were engaged in the battle and the campaigns leading to it, as well as by all soldiers. General Hamilton's letter is as follows:

MILWAUKEE, Oct. 28, 1882.

The Chicago *Tribune* of the 25th inst. contains a letter from Arthur C. Ducat—a reply, he deems it—to a statement of historical facts made by me at the meeting of the surviving officers of the battle of Corinth on the 4th inst. No candid man who took the trouble to read that statement can find a word or sentence in it that can be construed into an attack on General Rosecrans. It was a severe but just criticism on his official acts as connected with that battle, and as it is only comparatively recently that earnest efforts have been made to get at the true history of the chief battles of the rebellion, the one who is cognizant of such facts and can substantiate them, should be reasonably free from censure and malice, if the facts bear hard upon the official record of the commanders most interested. If Gen. Rosecrans is the man I take him to be, he will be prompt to recognize and acknowledge what he knows to be true, but which his staff officer takes upon himself to deny;

AND WHAT A DENIAL.

Part of it he forgets—does not recollect; another part cannot be so, forsooth, because, he does not know it to be so, and because *he* does not know it to be so, he is positive no one of the seventeen thousand officers and soldiers of the Corinth army ever heard of it. And not only does he take it upon himself to forget what he knows to be true, but in his sycophantic frenzy he bursts into a personal attack and talks blindly of "special and interested eulogists," "attacking the dead," "butterfly friends," "false and ungrateful ones," "attacks of calumniators," "filch his glory and build up reputation on his deeds," "attack on his reason and his fame," etc., etc.

Let all this go for just what Ducat thinks it is worth.

With reference to the time and place of my statement, I can conceive of no fitter time and place than an anniversary meeting where officers had gathered to talk over their campaigns. Especially was this the case in a meeting called (as the letters of invitation read) "to put this battle in its true place in history."

In that statement I made a mistake. I hasten to correct it. I alluded to Ducat as chief of staff. He was not. In one of his dispatches dated on the day of the battle, addressed to me, he signs himself "Lieut. Col. and general officer of grand guards, outposts and pickets." Few officers could bear such a title—except in sections. The honorable position of chief of staff was filled by Col. Kennett, an able and gallant officer.

THE FACTS.

On the morning of Oct. 3d, Gen. Rosecrans

called his division commanders together at headquarters, and laid before them the plan of battle as I stated it at the anniversary meeting. That plan embraced a flank attack by either both McKean's and my divisions, as circumstances would admit. The box was used as an illustration of the plan. I used it because it was convenient, terse and expressive. I did not palliate it. Ducat could not have been present at that meeting or he would have been consulted with the plan. Indeed, it is certain, although he was not present, and that Gen. Rosecrans did not deem it prudent to trust him with it.

The meeting was not a council. No officer was asked for an opinion. Each received his instructions and departed to his command without other thought than to do his best to carry out the plan of the general commanding.

Now, it often happens that plans are laid that do not meet the exigencies of the case, and are abandoned, and others acted upon, and those abandoned are not mentioned in the reports of operations. Thus it happened to McKean, who being fronted by forces vastly superior, came so near being outflanked himself, that not only was his proposed flank attack rendered impossible, but it became necessary to draw support to him from Stanley's division, which it was remembered was on the far left. This exigency left the flank attack then solely to my division on the extreme right.

This flank attack was held back by Gen. Rosecrans until after 5 P. M., and then ordered by him. It was thwarted, as stated in my official report, by one of the brigades getting a long way out of place, by mistaking a watching party of the enemy for the enemy in force; and before the brigade could be recalled and got into position for attack, night had fallen. The original orders and dispatches governing all these matters are in my possession, subject to the perusal of any one interested.

Now, as to the plan of battle remaining the same for the next day, let us consult, not Ducat's memory, but his records. In his letter he uses the following language: "The disposition of the troops and plans of the 4th were made known to the writer and other members of the staff early in the evening of the 3d, and instructions were given to assist personally in the formations. I am not aware of any change in the plan of the general commanding later in the night."

Here is a record:

HEADQUARTERS, Army of the Mississippi.

7 P. M., Oct. 3d, 1862.

General: Throw out, promptly, videttes, pickets, grand guards, scouts in rear of—(word illegible) on your front and flanks. Pick up all the prisoners you can. Get all the information possible * * * During the night and coming daylight much will depend on the vigilance of outposts and guards.

By order of GEN. ROSECRANS.

ARTHUR C. DUCAT, Lt. Col., chief of grand guards and outposts.

To GENERAL HAMILTON.

es this look like a change of position early evening? No thought of a change was until Gen. Rosecrans came out on the field P. M.

e is another dispatch.

11:30 P. M.

ERAL HAMILTON: The general commands you to have your change of front executed at night and not by any means wait for it. The moon will furnish you sufficient light. Resp'y, S. C. LYFORD, Act'g A. D. C.

A change was being made when this order was received.

Rosecrans, in his testimony before the committee on the conduct of the war, testified as to the change: "I determined on a readjustment of the front for a final battle, making use of what was available in our new line of defense, (fortifications close to the town) to prevent the enemy from turning our right. *This was accomplished by 3 A. M. of the 4th.*"

But why repeat? There are living at least half a dozen officers who heard Rosecrans' censorious question on the field at 10 P. M. "What do you mean by disobeying

MY ORDER FOR A NIGHT ATTACK?"

heard the conversation that followed, heard the approval of this commander of the reasons for declining to make the attack until the interview could be had, and heard the orders given at the close to put the wounded in the ambulance and start them with the ammunition wagons in advance to be followed by the whole command, taking a circuitous route to conceal the movement from the enemy.

Ducat does not recollect any order for a night attack. It is passing strange that an officer can carry an order three miles after night, take back a reply, and still later in the night bring back his chief and sit by his side, listen to the censorious questions to the division commander, hear the orders for the movement resulting from the interview, and remember nothing about it. Even if the order had been sealed, and the reply sealed so that he could know nothing of the contents, the conversation which took place in his hearing should have carried to his obtuse ears a full understanding of the order which was disobeyed

It might have helped his memory had he been present at the anniversary meeting and heard the corroborative testimony of a distinguished officer there present, and also present at the interview on the field: that officer heard it all and does not hesitate to tell the truth.

One does not know which to admire most, the convenient memory, or the assurance with which he discusses the science of war. Read his lucid remarks on night attacks and judge.

But then Ducat is authority on night attacks, and was evidently suffering from one when he gave vent to his "straight-from-the-shoulder letter."

Corinth was a fortified place, rather an intrenched camp; made so that it might be held by a smaller force against a greater one. It was the depot of supplies for a great part of Grant's army, and was of the utmost importance. Now it was not only reasonable to suppose, but it was certain, if the enemy attacked it, he would do so with such a preponderance of force as to give reasonable hope of overcoming the garrison, and also the fortifications.

In the light of this fact, the wisdom of going outside the fortified lines to fight a battle, may well be questioned.

The first day's fight was in the open field, and that the plan was to fight the battle there on the second day, Ducat's order is convincing.

The whole plan of fighting in the open field was a mistake, but all honor to General Rosecrans for instantly abandoning his mistaken plan, and correcting his error as rapidly as possible when he found it out, which he did not do until his order for a night attack had been disobeyed, and he was given the reasons therefor.

It does not detract from Gen. Rosecrans' ability that he made a mistake.

"Show me the commander who never made a mistake, and I will show you a fool, or a man who never made war," was the utterance of one of history's greatest chieftains.

Ducat says: "Rosecrans is not quite a dead lion." Granted. But there must have been a dead lion around somewhere or the author of that phrase would not so readily have found the skin of one to crawl into.

C. S. HAMILTON.

LETTER FROM ARTHUR C. DUCAT.

[From Milwaukee Sunday Telegraph, Dec. 17th, 1882.]

DOWNER'S GROVE, Illinois, Dec. 7, 1882.

To the Editors of The Sunday Telegraph:

Upon my return from an absence, my attention has been called to a letter from Maj. Gen. C. S. Hamilton, late U. S. A., published in your issue of Nov. 12, 1882, purporting to be a reply to an article of mine in the *Chicago Tribune* of 25th October, 1882, under date of 18th of that month, and kindly republished by you beside Gen. Hamilton's reply. The article was written in reply to a speech made, or a paper read, at an anniversary dinner of surviving officers of the battle of Corinth, Miss., at Chicago on the 4th of October, 1882, by Maj. Gen. Hamilton, and published in the *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 18, 1882. I have been thus particular about the dates of the publication of Gen. Hamilton's paper, or speech, and the publications of the various documents since, that Gen. Hamilton's important contribution to the history of the war may not be lost sight of, but may be found and read by all who are interested.

Gen. Hamilton, with an utter want of the dignity that should characterize a major general, having stooped to personal abuse and vituperation, should not have from me the consideration of a reply, were it not improper to permit that his outrage on history should remain uncontradicted in any record where it may have found place.

Referring particularly to the documents mentioned, let us take this letter of Gen. Hamilton's, published in your issue of 12th Nov., 1882, to pieces and see what it is made of. Gen. Hamilton finds that his attack on Gen. Rosecrans was not under the circumstances of time, place, occasion, or after twenty years, or in any other way, as popular as he expected, but it is characterized by all true soldiers and gentlemen as cowardly, ungrateful and a wretched piece of egotism in the worst possible taste, and he says: "No candid man who took the trouble to read that statement can find a word or sentence in it that can be construed into an attack on Gen. Rosecrans." This has no argument in it. Every man who read the "statement" will think for himself; it will present itself to different minds in different ways, and has little to do with history. It would be interesting, however, to know what candid gentlemen would say of it, and it is to be hoped that they will record their opinions.

"THE FACTS."

The plan of the battle, as stated by Gen. Hamilton at the anniversary meeting, he does not even pretend to prove in his letter. The "box" may be "convenient, terse and expressive," (how could it be otherwise,) but the re-assertion of the general is good for nothing, now, without the proofs. It would be a mere contest as to who would have the last word, without proper court of inquiry, and the writer desires to say that he has neither the time nor the inclination to engage in such wars of words.

Gen. Hamilton, after waiting twenty tells the extraordinary and unsupported of the plan, "the box" and the proposer attack" which surprise the living actors in, are contradicted by me, and the burden of proof is squarely on his shoulders. I see, too, that his statements go into the for history side by side with their refutation.

Let us see what Gen. Rosecrans says. His report dated 28th Oct. 1862, only twenty after this battle. Writing of the situation at the battle he says: "There being indications of a possible attack on Corinth immediately, the following disposition of troops will be made: Gen. Mc Kean with his division will occupy the present position. Gen. Davies will occupy the line between the Memphis and Columbus road. Gen. Hamilton with his division will take position between the rebel works," (the writer will state here, that when the rebel works, or breastworks, or fortifications are referred to, they mean the old works of the enemy constructed when they held Corinth,) "on the Purdy and the Hamburg roads: and Gen. Stanley will hold his division in reserve at or near the old headquarters of Gen. Grant." Observe here that the division of Gen. Stanley in reserve was in Corinth. Did this look like an intention to fight the battle in the open field? No.

Gen. Rosecrans proceeds: "These dispositions were made, and the troops, at 9 o'clock on the morning of the 3d, occupied the position shown on the accompanying map. Hamilton on the right, Davies the center, McKean, the left with an advance of three regiments of infantry and a section of artillery under Col. Oliver on the Chewalla road." Here is the line of battle thrown out to develop and feel the attack of the enemy; Gen. Hamilton had the right of this line.

General Rosecrans furthermore says: "The general plan which was explained to the division commanders verbally in the morning, was to hold the enemy at arms length by approaching him strongly," [Gen. Hamilton did not approach him at all] "and when his force became fully developed and had assumed a position, to take a position which would give us the use of our batteries," [our batteries were in the town of Corinth and some of them back of it from the front of the enemy's attack] "and the open ground in the vicinity of Corinth."

Does this not carry with it conviction? There was no open ground except in Corinth and immediately under the earthwork batteries in Corinth and such ground as had been cleared for their range. This disposes of Gen. Hamilton's "box" unless the one he has gotten himself into. But let us proceed.

Referring to Col. Oliver's position, before mentioned, and Gen. McArthur having been sent to the front and the widespread skirmishing in that direction reported by him, General Rosecrans says: "But it proved that Gen. McArthur had

up four more regiments from McKean's division," (this means in addition to the three regiments under Col. Oliver) "and was contesting the ground almost for a battle," (just like McArthur.) It is this which induced Gen. Davies to ask permission to rest his right on the rebel entrenchment, and to which I consented, adding the verger to Lient. Col. Ducat that he might use argument about his leaving his present position." The writer has given the above paragraph to show that if there was a "box" plan, he would not have known something of it even though Hamilton indicates that Gen. Rosecrans should not trust him. The details of the battle—it had now reached a desperate resistance against a superior force, Gen. Rosecrans says: "Order was accordingly given for McKean to fall back to the next ridge," (McKean was well out to the front,) "beyond our intrenchments, to touch his right on Davies' left, for Stanley to move northward and eastward to stand in close echelon, but nearer town, Gen. Hamilton" (he had not been engaged,) "was ordered to face toward Chewalla and move down until his left reached Davies' right"—now mark this above order.

The senior staff officer on duty on the right of the line of battle of the troops engaged, found that Gen. Hamilton was not supporting or engaged, and that he did not touch Davies, nor had he touched Gen. Davies' right, as it would have been his clear duty to do, even if he had not been ordered to do so, as he had, and held the right of the line, and on going to find him, found that the enemy had actually deployed a heavy flanking, well supported skirmish line between his left and Gen. Hamilton.

Gen. VanDorn, the rebel commander, and members of his staff told the writer a couple of weeks after, when he had the honor of being detailed to bear a flag of truce to the army of the enemy, "that they did not know that Gen. Hamilton was on their left until the afternoon." It looks as if Gen. Hamilton, to say nothing of his not fighting the enemy, was likely, and the only one at all likely, to get into his "box." The gallant troops engaged were doing splendidly, though fighting such terrible odds, and entirely unsupported on the right. It was a most unequal battle at this time; it will not be thought an exaggeration if it is stated that 10,000 of our men were fighting 30,000 of the enemy, or in that proportion for six hours.

The feelings of the officers and men of Gen. Hamilton's fine division can be appreciated; they must have thought the battle was to be fought without them; though they were very near the enemy, and the tide of battle had swept by their front, not a "Springfield" shot from their position.

Now here is richness, soldiers read this: Gen. Hamilton says, in what is likely to be his famous anniversary speech or paper: "An attempt was made late in the afternoon of the 3d by Hamilton's division to attack the enemy's left flank, but which was thwarted by one brigade becoming separated from the other, and becoming engaged with a 'watching party' on the enemy's extreme left. The attack could not safely be made, but by the whole division, and before the brigade could

be withdrawn and got into supporting position, night had come on and the attack was frustrated."

The writer don't believe there is in the record of the war such a confession of weakness, and such a wretched attempt to bolster up a failure to obey instructions, and not perform the clear duty of a general to keep his touch on the line of battle on his flank, and to fail to march with the instincts of a soldier to the music of battle as this one. Who, pretending to be a general, would not have found out for himself the situation, but this one? How necessary General Hamilton finds it, after twenty years, to attempt to "mend his fence!" He talks as a guilty man will talk of, and return to the place of his crime. Is this the true reason for his attack on General Rosecrans, this fear of truth and right, the facts of this part of the history of Corinth?

Gen. Hamilton, towards the close of his letter, becomes magnanimous to Gen. Rosecrans, says he made a mistake and forgives him, (what a blessed thing for Rosecrans,) with a quotation, author not given; can it be Hamilton?

Here is a quotation from "The Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte" by the Count Labedoyere, London Geo. Virtue 26 Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row, 1839—vol. 2, page 879. It is given for the benefit of Gen. Hamilton, though no comparison is made or intended between the men. Labedoyere says, writing of Waterloo: "In regard to Marshal Grouchy, it appears, conformably with the first orders given, that he confined himself to observing the Prussians on the 18th, (the day of Waterloo.) At nine in the morning, he had quitted his cantonments to march for Wavres, and, on reaching Walhain, he heard the cannonading at Mont St. Jean, when the increasing briskness left no doubt but it was a very serious affair. General Excelmans proposed marching by the right bank of the Dyle. 'Do you not feel,' said he to the marshal, 'that this cannonading makes the ground tremble under our feet. Let us march straight forwards to the battle.' The marshal, however, continued his slow movements," (our general did not move at all,) "and at two o'clock arrived at Wavres. At seven he received orders from the major-general to march to St. Lambert and attack Bulow, which step ought to have been suggested to him before by the tremendous cannonading at Waterloo."

There are several quotations from Napier's history of the Peninsular war that would fit this case, if there was time and space.

Reference to Gen. Logan's able reply to Gen. Grant's plea for Fitz John Porter shows some passages as peculiarly applicable to the conduct of Gen. Hamilton on the first day of the battle of Corinth. Reference is made to the action of one of Logan's brigades on the flank of the enemy and its results. Hamilton did not deem it safe to do anything with less than his whole division, and then under a special command to attack.

The well known fact that Gen. Hamilton did no fighting on this first day, which covered with glory the gallant troops of the divisions engaged, had much better for him have been left a simple record than in the shape he has put it in now, and in his attempt to filch glory out of worse than nothing, he evidently has forgotten the story of the frog in the fable.

The staff officer who discovered that Gen. Hamilton was not supporting, and that there was a skirmish line between him and our fighting right, promptly reported the fact to Gen. Rosecrans, and rode through that skirmish line when he carried Gen. Hamilton his order to do something. Gen. Hamilton sent one brigade, (Sullivan's) in the direction indicated by the staff officer, and it struck the skirmish line immediately.

"HAMILTON'S WATCHING PARTY."

The next brigade, (Buford's,) was sent forward, and, like the gallant gentleman that he was and is, Gen. Buford eagerly moved forward to the front, but without proper instructions as to the direction that he was to take. The staff officer asked Gen. Hamilton "if this brigade was going to Bolivar or to attack the enemy," whereupon Gen. Hamilton, not going forward and leading the brigade to support Sullivan, recalled it and sent it again in the direction Sullivan's brigade was sent. Gen. Hamilton did not leave his position, but remained with his 3d brigade, and the battle was over from the darkness. Neither brigade struck the enemy in any force; in fact there was no exchange of shots that day by Gen. Hamilton's division of this small army of 17,000 men, but by Sullivan's brigade with the "watching party" as described by Gen. Hamilton himself.

Gen. Hamilton says: "Now as to the plan of battle remaining the same for the second day, let us consult not Ducat's memory but his records." Gen. Hamilton quotes an order of Gen. Rosecrans, signed by the writer, "to picket his front and flanks, pick up prisoners, and get all the information possible." Good Heavens! what General with the knowledge of what happened to Gen. Hamilton on the 3d, would not deem this necessary in his case, and what staff officer would be worthy the name who would not, with what he knew, suggest it to his chief. Where is the proof in this of anything, only that it was deemed advisable to look after Gen. Hamilton and see that he performed a duty known as necessary by every novice. Then Gen. Hamilton reviews an order from Gen. Rosecrans to which he attaches weight. The order is signed by now Col. Lyford, Assistant Chief of Ordinance, U. S. A., at Washington, D. C. It says: "The General commanding wishes you to have your change of front executed to-night and not by any means to wait for daylight. The moon will furnish you sufficient light." What does this prove or mean only that Gen. Rosecrans had made dispositions and given orders, and desired them completed

and executed before daylight, at which time might look for a re-opening of the battle, that this spur to Gen. Hamilton, considering inactivity on the 3d, was needed; only this, nothing more. Did Gen. Rosecrans ever say he had not determined on a readjustment of lines made first to feel the enemy, and strongly enough to draw him under the de of Corinth, and maintained by necessity from fierce attacks of such an overwhelming upon only half of his army? His original plan to fight on his inner line, under his battle the open ground and range of hills on the (See his report.)

If Gen. Hamilton had been in the line where he belonged, and it had been fallen back and he with it, and under we would have been in the chosen position first day, (the 3d,) but instead of that he looked for, hunted up, and not let he had gotten to, and would have been put in a "box."

Yes, "why repeat?" The absurd "night attack" calls for no more at that subject I am entirely unanswerable.

The writer had the honor early in the 3d, of receiving from Gen. Rosecrans instructions as to the disposition of the line of battle for the 4th, and with the making of such disposition of positions on the left center and Gen. Rosecrans in person giving his attention to the disposition of the troops on the right center, right wing, in which he was engaged till 3 o'clock A. M. on the 4th, at which hour the writer reported to him and explained on the map of the position what had been done, and where each command was, and received his approval.

The rest of Gen. Hamilton's letter is taken up with most unbecoming personal references, and a miserable and slangy attempt at wit and ridicule mixed with low insinuations, to which I have neither cause or inclination to reply, and in which the reader can take no possible interest, only to regret it, if he should be Gen. Hamilton's friend.

In connection with this letter, the writer regrets two things: That it was necessary, from Gen. Hamilton's action, to in any way introduce the personal pronoun, or to trouble you with the length of this epistle, found difficult to curtail and do the subject fair justice.

"It was a famous victory."

ARTHUR C. DUCAT.

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